

## EDUCATING FOR LANDPOWER

BY

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**EDUCATING FOR LANDPOWER**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

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## EDUCATING FOR LANDPOWER

The real conquests, the only ones that do not cause regret, are those that are won over ignorance.

—Napoleon Bonaparte<sup>1</sup>

In the fall of 2006, Lieutenant Colonel Ray Horter, an infantry officer and Battalion Commander, was notified that his battalion would deploy in support of ongoing operations in Iraq. While the announcement was not a surprise, Ray realized that the battalion was deploying 4 months ahead of schedule which would significantly impact the time remaining to prepare the battalion for its mission. Already short on key personnel and critical capabilities Ray knew it was an uphill climb to get the battalion ready. Seven months later, Ray found himself and his battalion on the outskirts of Baghdad dealing with several different adversaries, completely unlike his first deployment to Iraq in 2003. In several emails to the author<sup>2</sup>, Ray admitted that his past experiences in combat had not prepared him for what he was facing today. Within two weeks of arriving in the battalion's area of responsibility, Ray found himself negotiating with Sunni and Shiite leaders over future reconstruction projects; working with U.S. Army Military Transition Teams to assist Iraqi Army units; assisting Iraqi civilian police with law enforcement; and assisting Iraqi leaders with social projects designed to reinvigorate trust in the local government. As much as Ray was unprepared for some of these tasks he was more concerned with the readiness of his subordinate commanders to deal with the myriad of "non-traditional" stability and support tasks confronting them on a daily basis. The subordinate leaders simply did not have the right tools in their kitbags to socially interact with such a diverse culture using mature interpersonal skills. Ray's battalion received all of the pre-deployment cultural briefings but readily admits

that much of the information did little to prepare the battalion's leaders for what they faced in 2007.

Is the Army's Education System adapting to the current operating environment? Is there enough rigor and reflective thought in the process to capture lessons learned and quickly turn that knowledge into systems and processes designed to prepare our landpower leaders? How is the Army adapting our educational processes to prepare our landpower leaders of tomorrow who will most certainly be faced with adversaries of increasing complexity and operating in a very uncertain environment? What will the future security environment look like? What skills, competencies, attributes, and background should future leaders possess in order to be successful?

### The Future Strategic Environment

There is no shortage of academic and non-academic material available purporting to describe, predict, or forecast the future security environment that United States military and civilian leaders will find themselves operating in over the next 15 to 20 years. Numerous scholars, former and current military leaders, war and conflict theorists, and the occasional arm-chair quarterback have all opined what the future security environment will look like. Only by reading and critically examining the various works can military and civilian trainers and educators begin to prepare our future military and civilian leaders for the future. The focus should not necessarily be on the predictions, but on teaching the mental agility to understand the immediate operating environment. Although focused on future military landpower leaders, many of the ideas and concepts are directly applicable to all military leaders as well as civilian counterparts working in the national security arena. The theories and forecasts of the

future security environment described below provides context as educators explore how the military must begin thinking about the educational requirements of future military landpower leaders.

Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Henry K. Shelton, described several factors, linked to probable threats, that will affect the changing nature of the future security environment.<sup>3</sup> General Shelton highlighted a much shortened strategic response time that characterizes United States military action, an increased number of failed states featuring people struggling for independence and political legitimacy, the proliferation of technologies available to potential adversaries, and the growing range and types of conflicts characterized by asymmetric attacks, anti-access strategies, and information warfare designed to counter our strengths and prevent United States forces from deploying.<sup>4</sup> It is easy to argue that General Shelton's ideas are happening now and nothing new but, the speed and complexities of the factors he describes are growing exponentially and show no signs of tapering. The key point is to critically examine how the Officer Education System (OES) is keeping pace with the changes to the operating environment and by exploring how the education process is adapting to educate the future military landpower leaders to deal with the complexities of the changing security environment.

Dr. Steven Metz and LTC Raymond A. Millen describe a similar future operating environment in their March, 2003 monograph *"Future War/Future Battlespace: The Strategic Role of American Landpower."*<sup>5</sup> The authors describe an environment with a marked decline of large-scale state-on-state warfare and the rise of ambiguous, protracted, indecisive conflict in complex environments. Moreover, the future security

environment will be characterized by smaller scale conflicts that are heavily influenced by interconnected trends such as WMD proliferation, globalization, United States conventional military dominance, positive and negative effects of rapid changes on states, and the rapid diffusion of knowledge and technology.<sup>6</sup> The adversary operating in this type of environment will be much more savvy of United States intent and capabilities and will seek to negate or bypass our strengths. In addition, the authors contend that adversaries with greater access to WMD, funding, and situational awareness will be unconstrained by norms, rules, and laws that will serve to further complicate the environment by seeking victory by avoiding defeat and operating within population centers.<sup>7</sup> While these ideas and concepts don't put forth a new paradigm, the increasing complexity and the increasing number of practitioners of this type of warfare are quickly becoming the norm rather than the exception.

The Metz and Millen monograph describes a future security environment characterized by four distinct but interrelated dominant strategic battlespaces: direct interstate war, non-state war, intrastate war, and indirect interstate war.<sup>8</sup> More importantly the monograph describes an environment in which United States forces may be called upon to prevent, restore, and sustain stability rather than to defeat an identifiable enemy. The future battlespace expands the concept of armed conflict by placing the operational aspects within a broader context that include political, economic, social, ecological, demographic, legal, diplomatic, and technological aspects.<sup>9</sup> In the context of this argument, Metz and Millen use the term precision to describe a key aspect for both operational and strategic success in the future environment. This concept of precision is essential to officer education because the authors apply the term

in the psychological context. They write, “psychological precision often requires extended, direct human contact in order to gauge and adjust effects.”<sup>10</sup> It may also demand extensive and intensive cross-cultural understanding of the psychological effect an action which is, to some extent, culturally determined; a concept our current officer education system is only beginning to explore.<sup>11</sup> To agree with the author’s argument, robust and versatile United States landpower will be vital to operate in this type of complex and ambiguous security environment. The United States’ landpower forces are the only forces that can simultaneously contribute to rapid decisive operations against conventional military forces, undertake stability operations, and assure security while a population’s political, social, and economic systems are reformed. Stability and support missions place a premium on non-kinetic operations “amongst the people.” For that very reason, the officer education system must focus on educating future landpower leaders with the concepts and skills that enable critical-thinking and decision-making in complex, ambiguous and time compressed environments.

The idea of Fourth Generation Warfare (4GW) has also gained influence with National Security Decision makers. The concept, and attributes, of 4GW are described by several individuals and, while they may share some common conceptualization, there are at times differences between the pundits. In *The Changing Face of War: Into the Fourth Generation*<sup>12</sup>, William Lind describes 4GW in broad terms. “Fourth Generation Warfare seems likely to be widely dispersed and largely undefined; the distinction between war and peace will be blurred to the vanishing point. It will be nonlinear, possibly to the point of having no definable battlefield or fronts. The distinction between civilian and military may disappear. Actions will occur concurrently

throughout all participants' depth, including their society as a cultural, not just a physical, entity."<sup>13</sup> The author goes on to describe two possible drivers of 4GW that future adversaries will employ: technology-driven and idea-driven. Technology-driven 4GW is characterized by "small, highly mobile elements composed of very intelligent soldiers armed with high-technology weapons that may range over wide areas seeking critical targets."<sup>14</sup> A blurring of the tactical and strategic environment results as the adversary bypasses or ignores military forces in favor of targeting our political infrastructure and civilian society. Idea-driven 4GW is characterized by the emergence of non-Western cultural traditions which the author purports to be visible in today's terrorism. Today's successful terrorists operate on broad mission orders down to the individual level and use our society's greatest strength, our freedoms and openness, against us.<sup>15</sup>

In *War Evolves into the Fourth Generation*<sup>16</sup> the authors build upon previous literature and posit that 4GW practitioners use all available political, economic, social, and military networks to convince the United States' political decision-makers that our strategic goals or aims are either unachievable or too costly for the perceived benefit.<sup>17</sup> The key aspect put forth in the article is that superior political will, if employed properly, can and will overcome greater economic and military power.<sup>18</sup>

Frank Hoffman and General James Mattis describe the concept of a "hybrid war" in their article, *Future Warfare: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*.<sup>19</sup> The authors remind the reader throughout the article that the enemy has both the intent and capacity to reason creatively; similar to the old military saying that the enemy has a vote. Hybrid warfare is a combination of both conventional and irregular warfare. As one example, in hybrid

war the landpower professional could expect to simultaneously operate in an environment where a failed state lost control over Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) stockpiles, while combating an ideologically motivated adversary displaced from their homes, and providing humanitarian aid to refugees. The key to understanding hybrid war is that the adversary may not fully dispense with conventional style attacks; in fact, the adversary may choose conventional style attacks against perceived weaknesses while simultaneously employing terrorist or irregular warfare style attacks throughout or outside the battlespace against critical infrastructure.<sup>20</sup> General Charles Krulak, the former Marine Commandant, referred to the “three block war”<sup>21</sup> in various articles and speeches over the years. General Krulak’s reference is a perfect example of the complex nature of the hybrid fight. On one block the soldier is involved in a fierce firefight, the next block the soldier is handing out humanitarian assistance, while on the third block the soldier is negotiating to keep warring factions apart. Hoffman argues that landpower professionals of the future will also be operating on a fourth block; a block characterized by information warfare that is embedded in the three previously mentioned blocks.<sup>22</sup> Everything that a soldier does or fails to do is sending a message that could completely change the operating environment in which the force is operating. Today’s landpower professionals do receive fundamental training in information operations but are we educating our officers to be intellectually agile or just training them to employ the technological aspects?

Another key aspect of hybrid war, and arguably all irregular war, is the simple fact that the adversary focuses on the human terrain to identify success or failure. Examples abound in Iraq and Afghanistan where United States or coalition forces

successfully defeat the adversary's forces only to lose the strategic battle to protect or secure the population. Hybrid war is not a new phenomenon. Many theorists contend that hybrid war is just an evolution of a learning enemy who understands the complex nature of the environment and changes tactics to offset our advantages on the battlefield.

The future operating environment, as described by noted theorists and military professionals, will likely only increase in complexity as adversaries learn from past mistakes and alter their tactics. From failed states to ideological terrorists to the super-empowered individual, tomorrow's landpower professionals must be educated in a manner that prepares them to understand the nature of the fight and provide them the intellectual agility and critical thinking skills required to deal with a very uncertain environment. The theme running through all of the predictions is that tomorrow's landpower leaders must be adaptable, employ critical thinking skills, use interpersonal skills to address the human terrain, and display cultural understanding to deal with a very uncertain environment. Tomorrow's officers deserve an educational system that is built upon lessons learned and one that provides an atmosphere, both formal and informal, where they are exposed to different schools of thought. In addition, the education system must expand to incorporate non-conventional competencies such as governance and diplomacy at an earlier stage in the officers' career to prepare them for the environment in which they will operate.

Many officers will argue that the proverbial "rucksack" is already filled to the top and that adding additional tasks will overwhelm the more junior officers. Some of the skills not immediately relevant could be deferred in favor of essential skills already



identified as critical in the future operating environment. Today's junior officers are ready to learn and understand the ever changing operational environment – they are products of that environment. Investment in higher level cognitive abilities will pay dividends earlier in an officer's career. By educating officers to understand and acknowledge uncertain or ambiguous situations while in a non-combat environment the officer is more likely to make a decision rather than be paralyzed into inaction out of fear of the unknown.

It is important to note that as an institution, the United States Army, and military as a whole, is universally recognized for producing very talented and decisive leaders. That fact is not in question. What is in question is whether or not the education system, that has served the military so well in a linear combat environment, can be changed or adapted to work just as well in the current and future complex operating environment.

### The Army Training System

The Army Training System (ATS) comprises both training and education and serves to synchronize the three training domains referred to as the institutional, operational, and self-development domains.<sup>23</sup> Training prepares individuals for certainty while education prepares individuals for uncertainty and enables agility, judgment, and creativity. Army Field Manual 7-0, *Training For Full Spectrum Operations*, offers a very useful definition of the two terms.<sup>24</sup> Interestingly enough, the two terms are often used interchangeably when, in fact, the two have very distinct applications within the Army Training System. Training prepares individuals and organizations by developing the skills, functions and teamwork necessary to accomplish a task or mission successfully. Training is generally associated with “what to do” and often includes repetitive tasks.

Education, in contrast, provides intellectual constructs and principles and allows leaders to apply knowledge and solve problems under uncertain or ambiguous conditions.

Education is generally associated with “how to think” and how to solve problems that may not have any one right answer.

Within the three training-domain framework, Army officers can expect to be exposed to various training and educational opportunities throughout a twenty year career. FM 7.0 calls these opportunities the Training and Education Lifecycle of an individual and introduces the concept of lifelong learning which expands learning from the classroom to the entire life experience. In the institutional domain, officers focus on building basic warrior skills and training on tasks that ultimately support the unit of assignment’s mission-essential tasks. In the operational domain officers build upon those skills previously introduced, train on new skills developed by unit leadership, and receive exposure to collective skills required to support the unit’s mission. The self-development domain is designed to complement the two previously mentioned domains and allow the individual officer to expand their knowledge base and prepare for future assignments or opportunities. Self-development generally relies on the internal motivation of the individual officer, although some units, resource dependent, have created innovative systems to encourage self-development.

The Officer Education System (OES), a subset of the Army Training System, has the goal of producing officers that are fully competent in their core warfighting skills; understand how the Army fits into the joint and multi-national environment; demonstrate identified competencies and attributes; use critical judgment and reasoning; display adaptability and versatility; and can operate in an environment of complexity and

ambiguity.<sup>25</sup> The framework of the Officer Education System has evolved little over the past decade and has not kept pace with a transforming Army. The levels of OES now include pre-commissioning/Basic Officer Leadership Course (BOLC) I; BOLC II and III; the Captain's Career Course (CCC); Intermediate Level Education (ILE); and Senior Service College (SSC).<sup>26</sup> Within this framework, the relative importance of training and education move along, what some have called, a sliding scale of leadership that attempts to capture how, as an officers career evolves, the need for increased educational opportunities take precedence over training.<sup>27</sup> Early in an officer's career training is paramount as the new leader adjusts to the military, inculcates the warrior ethos, and prepares for the first unit of assignment. Over time, the sliding scale shifts from a focus on training for certainty to educating for uncertainty. Under the current Officer Education System the shift from training to education supposedly takes place at the Captain's Career Course where officers are exposed to the concepts of critical thinking and how to think. In reality, the shift normally takes place during attendance at the Intermediate Level Education. Many argue that the sliding scale is no longer a useful tool; the ever changing security environment has blurred the distinction and new tools may be needed.

Today's current Officer Education System has not adapted over time to keep pace with transformation and remains firmly rooted in a cold war mentality that visualizes the operating environment through the lens of the tactical, operational, and strategic-levels of war. In addition, the system is based on several false assumptions that must be addressed. One, officers will not serve in positions forcing them to make decisions or provide advice at a level they had not yet been schooled for; two, future

training and experiences an officer receives “on the job” will adequately prepare the officer for advancement and additional schooling; and three, officers are inherently self-motivated enough to learn what has not be taught. Current operations in Iraq and Afghanistan clearly indicate that junior officers are making decisions and offering advice in situations in which they have no experience or formal education. These same officers are operating at the tactical, operational, and strategic-level daily and often concurrently. The level and environment our junior officers are operating in today is associated with the formal schooling and experiences of a senior Major or Lieutenant Colonel. Lastly, recent research has shown that adult learners rarely approach education with an appreciation of what they want to learn or how to go about learning, and rarely seek knowledge on their own.<sup>28</sup> The Army has recently introduced critical thinking skills into “school-house” curriculum, a step in the right direction, but the education process, as a whole, still fails to address the critical skills of cultural understanding, educating for adaptability, and educating officers with interpersonal skills required to operate in the human terrain.

### Educating Landpower Professionals

Nassim Taleb, author of the book, *The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable*,<sup>29</sup> describes the concept of the Black Swan. Taleb states that in order for an event to be called a Black Swan three attributes are required. “One, it must be an outlier; it lies outside the realm of regular expectations, because nothing in the past can convincingly point to its possibility. Second, it carries an extreme impact. Third, in spite of its outlier status, human nature makes us concoct explanations for its occurrence after the fact, making it explainable and predictable.”<sup>30</sup> How we educate tomorrow’s

landpower leaders is more important than trying to accurately predict the future security environment; human beings have not been very successful in predicting the occurrence of a Black Swan, what makes us think that the future will be any different? Therefore, educating officers to use critical thinking skills, employing increased cultural awareness, rewarding mental agility or creativeness, and teaching interpersonal skills will further the ability of tomorrow's landpower professional to react to changing situations and to be better prepared to recognize the environment in which they are operating.

Think left and think right and think low and think high. Oh, the things you can think up if you only try!

—Dr. Seuss<sup>31</sup>

The only thing harder than learning to think critically is trying to pin down scholars and instructors with an accurate, or even widely accepted, definition of the concept. In addition to an accepted definition of critical thinking, the issue of whether or not it is possible to train leaders to think critically or whether there is an accurate method to measure critical thinking remains unsolved and the subject of intense research by both military and civilian researchers. In his paper, *Critical Thinking in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*,<sup>32</sup> Major General (Ret) Lon Maggart cautions the reader not to think of critical thinking as a defined process; critical thinking, by its very nature, requires divergent thought and does not lend itself to another military decision-making process or staff action. General Maggart introduces several required leader skills that he believes every leader must possess in order to be successful in tomorrow's security environment and emphasizes that these skills must be introduced to leaders much earlier in their careers in order to develop senior leaders who are mentally flexible. Lastly, General Maggart identifies three key tenets that professional military education must introduce to successfully

integrate critical thinking into the Army culture.<sup>33</sup> Those tenets are exposure to various and divergent literature, interaction with powerful thinkers and interesting life experiences, and the ability to use simulations. In *"Adapt or Die"*, Brigadier General David Fastabend articulates the need for critical thinking skills when he states "Most Army schools open with the standard bromide: "We are not going to teach you what to think...we are going to teach you how to think." They rarely do. Critical thinking is both art and science. There are techniques to critical thinking, such as careful application of logic, or the alternative application of deduction and induction. These techniques can be taught and learned."<sup>34</sup> The Army Research Institute (ARI) recognized the wide disparity of definitions and took the task of identifying principles that directly relate to training landpower professionals that could be incorporated into professional military education courses: 1. Frame the problem, 2. Recognize the main point in a message, 3. Visualize plans to see if they achieve goals, 4. Construct a plausible story that ties all incidents together, 5. Recognize fallibility and bias in one's own opinion, 6. Generalize from specific instances to broader classes, 7. Adopt multiple perspectives in interpreting events, 8. Determine when to seek more information.<sup>35</sup> Only through critical thinking can tomorrow's landpower professional learn to adjust to the unpredictable and extremely complex operating environment of the future. James J. Carafano, Ph.D., in his article, *On Teaching War: The Future of Professional Military Education*, wrote that the attribute most needed by tomorrow's landpower professional is the critical thinking skills that come from a graduate education program; thinking skills are the best preparation for ambiguity and uncertainty.<sup>36</sup>

While critical thinking skills are vital, building an officer corps that understands different cultures and can use that understanding to socially interact with the indigenous people is equally vital. Recent operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have required landpower leaders to interact and influence people from a vastly different culture. Language, cultural awareness, and interpersonal skills are increasingly critical skills that even the most junior officer must possess in order to be successful. Until recently, the only training or education that an officer received before deploying to a region was an ad hoc pre-deployment briefing that only touched the surface about the environment in which they were to conduct operations. Rarely, if ever, did the individual leader or Soldier receive education relevant enough to gain a greater understanding of the people involved in the conflict. The Army Research Institute published several studies in the past several years dealing with the subject of cultural awareness. One such study, *Building Cultural Capability for Full-Spectrum Operations*, focused on identifying the critical components of cultural training required for the Army Education System.<sup>37</sup> In the study, primary author, Allison Abbe, writes that building a cultural capability includes three interrelated components, including knowledge of the specific region or culture, proficiency in the spoken language, and general knowledge and skills that support adaption in any cross-cultural setting.<sup>38</sup> It is not enough to simply study a region; to be successful in future conflicts we must build a cadre of landpower professions that understand the culture and have what is called perceptual acuity —the ability to observe and interpret cultural information encountered through one's own experiences.<sup>39</sup> The term mirror-imaging, when used in the context of describing culture, usually means that an individual mentally reacts to an uncertain event by falling back on their own core

values and thus interpreting an event through that lens. Recent United States military operations in vastly different cultures clearly indicate that mirror imaging is not only dangerous but usually completely wrong. Cultural understanding, as opposed to knowledge, is important when considering the impact that operations will have on the local population. General Anthony Zinni once wrote, "Know the culture and the issues. We must know who the decision makers are. We must know how the involved parties think. We cannot impose our cultural values on people with their own culture."<sup>40</sup> In addition, the increasing number of stability and support operations will force landpower professionals to not only have a greater degree of cultural understanding but a greater ability to use skills rarely taught in today's military institutions. Those attributes include negotiation and mediation skills, the ability to visualize second and third order effects, and basic interpersonal skills. One surprising outcome from the ARI research indicates that while rudimentary language skills often convey respect to the local populace, effective interpersonal skills and cultural sensitivity contribute more to successful intercultural outcomes than language proficiency<sup>41</sup>. In his monograph, *Raising the Bar: Creating and Nurturing Adaptability to Deal with the Changing Face of War*, Donald Vandergriff, highlights a situation in which a Battalion Commander, Lieutenant Colonel Chris Hughes, successfully demonstrates the virtues of cultural understanding to diffuse a potentially disastrous situation.<sup>42</sup> In April 2003, during the invasion of Iraq, Lieutenant Colonel Hughes and his unit faced an angry mob in the town of Nasiriyah who thought that the American unit was there to threaten the very popular spiritual leader. Unbeknownst to the mob, the spiritual leader had actually invited the unit to come to the town to discuss the future. When faced with the angry mob, Lieutenant Colonel Hughes



chose not to inflame the situation, ordered his Soldiers to kneel down, take off their sunglasses, and smile before departing the area.<sup>43</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Hughes' superior cultural understanding and interpersonal skills were a result of years of self-study and not the result of a professional military education system attuned to the changing needs of its practitioners. The Army must reshape our educational institutions into what General Fastabend called a learning organization—an organization that can evolve with its operating environment through rapid application of lessons learned.<sup>44</sup>

Critical thinking, increased cultural understanding, adaptability, and interpersonal skills are important factors that must be addressed when re-focusing professional military education but those skills are only the beginning. A recent article in *Joint Force Quarterly*, *Military-Political Relations: The Need for Officer Education*, highlights a harbinger of the future roles the landpower professional may face. In the article, the authors use a statement from the House Armed Services Committee to highlight the ever expanding skills that an officer must possess in order to remain relevant. The committee statement reads "The Provincial Reconstruction Team experience in Afghanistan and Iraq demonstrates that, where inadequate civilian capacity to deploy for post-conflict stabilization and reconstruction operations exists, military and Department of Defense civilian personnel will be employed to carry out stability operations, regardless of whether they possess the requisite skills, technical expertise, or training."<sup>45</sup> The committee statement reflects the growing reality that today's, and more importantly tomorrow's, landpower professional must be educated to take on such diverse roles as de facto town mayor, coordinators of economic reconstruction or development, local sheriffs or even establishing the roots of diplomatic government

institutions. In other words, tomorrow's landpower professional must have a firm grasp of the geo-political environment in which they are operating and the Army, as an institution, must embrace this changing role and build an education system designed to educate officers, not on specific behaviors and attributes to display, but on mental agility and the ability to quickly understand the situation and make decisions. Secretary Of Defense Gates clearly articulated this changing mindset when he stated, "But in order to succeed in the asymmetric battlefields of the 21<sup>st</sup> century – the dominant combat environment in the decades to come, in my view – our Army will require leaders of uncommon agility, resourcefulness and imagination; leaders willing and able to think and act creatively and decisively in a different kind of world, in a different kind of conflict that we have prepared for for the last six decades."<sup>46</sup> The question should not be whether landpower forces are used in non-warfighting activities but, how is the Army and professional military education, adapting to educate tomorrow's leaders for the changing operational environment?

## Conclusion

The future security and operational environment is anything but predictable and, as history has taught us, the next Black Swan is just waiting to happen. The changing security environment has forced the Army to grapple with whether it should entrench itself and remain focused on core warfighting and conventional skills or to embrace the types of missions it has found itself operating in over the past two decades, characterized now as stability and support operations. The fundamental problem is that stability and support operations normally require vastly different competencies, competencies that the current Officer Education System is failing to provide. Lieutenant

Colonel Horter's experience in 2007 reflects the growing concern that today's Officer Education System is not enabling the Army to capture and expand the professional knowledge base of its intended audience. Critical thinking skills are taught far too late in an officer's career, cultural understanding education is virtually non-existent outside of Foreign Area Officer (FAO) or the Senior Service College domain, and displaying mature interpersonal skills are not only not rewarded in today's military culture but rarely addressed in an academic environment. In addition, soft-power skills, characterized by negotiation, mediation, governance and public administration, to name a few, are treated as orphan subjects and not worthy of inclusion in most professional military education courses. The focus should be on designing a professional military education system that is flexible and agile and one that will allow innovative or evolutionary changes to the academic curriculum to reflect lessons learned without having to fight the bureaucracy of paperwork and indecisiveness. The Army must work on building a core cadre of military officers who specialize in a specific region. The cadre goes beyond today's FAO; the officer would be identified much earlier in his/her career. These cultural officers would receive specialized training and education to become the cultural experts in their region and would spend years immersed in the region of study without having to worry about whether their career path made them a promotion risk. The cultural officer would be promoted based on demonstrated competencies, such as language abilities and advanced educational experiences, as determined by a board of educators. The Army would use this new cultural officer to augment the Army or Joint Force Commander's staff during times of crisis or contingency as the foremost cultural advisor.

Why does the Army wait so long in an officer's career before introducing critical thinking skills? Widely recognized as the best way to prepare an individual for ambiguity and uncertainty, critical thinking skills must be introduced as early as the pre-commissioning phase. Other professions require a board certification before the practitioner is allowed to operate independently. The Army could use the graduate degree as our board certification. The requirement to earn a graduate degree will create a huge demand, a demand that could be filled by the numerous institutions of higher learning in the United States. By identifying as many options as possible, including distance education, the diversity of our officer core will grow. It is not so important what the officer studies but rather on the creative and critical thinking skills learned that matters.<sup>47</sup>

The Army must redesign the self-development domain. The redesign should focus on rewarding initiative without punishing those who are caught up in the operational tempo of today's military. Examples could include specialty pay for officers who obtain advanced degrees in fields deemed critical to understanding stability and support operations such as public administration, public diplomacy or sociology. Army educators must recognize that while most military officers display initiative and motivation in their operational assignments, these traits don't necessarily transfer to the self-development domain and the spirit of lifelong learning. The Army has the Army Research Institute that should be directed to research efforts on determining the right mix of self-development educational experiences and on educational strategies to compliment institutional education experiences. Further, the use of distance learning should be maximized to allow officers to remain in the operating force while participating

in self-development. An officer's self-development plan should become as important as the Officer Evaluation Report (OER) and leaders should be held accountable for mentoring and monitoring a subordinate's self-development plan.

We must break the cultural barrier by rewarding assignments to critical enablers like the Department of State, Department of Commerce, or United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The PME institutions must be the genesis for this cultural change. The faculty and students of the professional military education institutions should reflect the diversity of the operational environment which they will return to; all organizations of the United States Government should be represented. With the ever increasing use of the military for stability and support operations, Secretary Gates' statement in Joint Force Quarterly that "from the standpoint of America's national security, the most important assignment in your military career may not be commanding United States Soldiers, but advising or mentoring the troops of other nations as they battle the forces of terror and instability within their own border"<sup>48</sup> should be a warning call to all personnel managers that the command track is not the only track to success. The Army personnel assignment process must change to reflect the changing realities of success.

Lastly, the importance of education and preparing tomorrow's landpower professionals cannot be understated. It is from within the professional military education institutions that cultural change will take root that will enable a true transformation of the landpower forces. Educators must be prepared to critically look at how we educate our future leaders and critically evaluate the underlying assumptions behind the current Officer Education System. OES is not changing fast enough to keep

pace with the changing operating environment and the need for officers skilled not only with core warfighting skills outlined in Field Manual 6-22, "Army Leadership", but in the nuanced attributes and competencies of soft-power. Changing our education system is not necessarily about introducing new innovations but about having the mental agility and forethought to know when to innovate in order to reduce the cycle. As BG Fastabend states, innovative organizations depend less on forecasting, planning, and control and more on scanning, agility, and feedback.<sup>49</sup> To remain relevant, the Army Officer Education System must focus on the key attributes of cultural understanding, mental adaptability, critical thinking, and interpersonal skills to educate the landpower leaders of tomorrow. We can no longer afford to wait until an officer reaches the Senior Service Colleges to build officers that are mentally agile and ready to proactively respond to future threats. Tomorrow's threat, in whatever form it takes, will not wait until our education system begins turning out our critically thinking leaders before they take advantage of our vulnerability. Only landpower forces provide the capability to control and dominate the land environment. The Army requires officers who are not only mentally agile but educated to think critically and creatively.

## Endnotes

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 5

<sup>5</sup> Steven Metz and Raymond A. Millen, "Future War/Future Battlespace: The Strategic Role of American Landpower," March 2003, linked from *Strategic Studies Institute Home Page* at "Monographs," <http://www.carlisle.army.mil/ssi/index> (accessed December 5, 2008).

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., viii.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., ix.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., viii.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 20.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>16</sup> Terry Terriff, Aaron Karp, and Regina Karp, comp., *Global Insurgency and the Future of Armed Conflict: Debating Fourth-Generation Warfare* (New York, NY: Routledge Books, 2008), 21.

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, *Training For Full Spectrum Operations*, Field Manual 7-0 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, December 2008), 3-2.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, *Army Training and Leader Development*, Army Regulation 350-1 (Washington DC: U.S. Department of the Army, August 3, 2007), 52.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Robert A. Tipton, Professional Military Education for the "Pentathlete" of the Future, Strategy Research Project (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Army War College, March 15, 2006), 7.

<sup>28</sup> Sharan B. Merriam and Ralph Brockett, *The Profession and Practice of Adult Education*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997), 135-143.

<sup>29</sup> Nassim Nicholas Taleb, *The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable* (New York, NY: Random House, 2007), xvii.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., xviii.

<sup>31</sup> Lon E. Maggart, "Critical Thinking in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," December 2000, linked from the *U.S. Army Research Institute Home Page* at "Research," <http://www.hqda.army.mil/ari/research/index> (accessed December 7, 2008).

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